

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 16

This chapter treats of the three grand yearly festivals, of the feast of passover, when, where, and what was to be sacrificed, how to be dressed, and in what manner to be eaten, (^{<5160>}Deuteronomy 16:1-8), of the feast of pentecost, when to begin it, where and how it was to be observed, (^{<5160>}Deuteronomy 16:9-12), and of the feast of tabernacles, when, where, and how long it was to be kept, (^{<5163>}Deuteronomy 16:13-15), which three times in the year all the males were to appear before the Lord, and not empty, (^{<5166>}Deuteronomy 16:16,17), an order is given for the appointment of judges in the land, to execute judgment, (^{<5168>}Deuteronomy 16:18-20), and the chapter is closed with a caution against planting groves, and setting up images, (^{<5162>}Deuteronomy 16:21,22).

Ver. 1. *Observe the month of Abib*, etc.] Sometimes called Nisan; it answered to part, of our March, and part of April; it was an observable month, to be taken notice of; it was called Abib, from the corn then appearing in ear, and beginning to ripen, and all things being in their verdure; the Septuagint calls it the month of new fruit; it was appointed the first of the months for ecclesiastic things, and was the month in which the Israelites went out of Egypt, and the first passover was kept in it, and therefore deserving of regard; (see ^{<0112>}Exodus 12:2 13:4)

for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night; for though they did not set out until morning, when it was day light, and are said to come out in the day, yet it was in the night the Lord did wonders for them, as Onkelos paraphrases this clause; that he smote all the firstborn in Egypt, and passed over the houses of the Israelites, the door posts being sprinkled with the blood of the passover lamb slain that night, and therefore was a night much to be observed; and it was in the night Pharaoh arose and gave them leave to go; and from that time they were no more under his power, and from thence may be reckoned their coming out of bondage; (see ^{<0112>}Exodus 12:12,29-31,42).

Ver. 2. *Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the Lord thy God,* etc.] In the month Abib, and in the night of that month they came out of Egypt, even on the fourteenth day of it at night, between the two evenings, as the Targum of Jonathan; which was a lamb, and typical of Christ, the passover sacrificed for us, (~~1~~1 Corinthians 5:7)

of the flock and the herd; that is, you shall sacrifice also the offerings which were offered throughout the seven days of unleavened bread, and these were both sheep and oxen, (~~28~~Numbers 28:19,24) and are expressly called passover offerings and peace offerings, (~~2~~2 Chronicles 30:21-24 35:7,8,9), for what was strictly and properly the passover was only of the flock, a lamb, and not of the herd, or a bullock; though Aben Ezra says there were some that thought that in Egypt it was only a lamb or a kid, but now it might be a bullock; which he observes is not right. It may be indeed that the word “passover” here is a general term, comprehending the whole passover solemnity, and all the sacrifices of the seven days: the Jews commonly understand this clause of the Chagigah, or feast of the fifteenth day, the first day of unleavened bread, and so the Targum of Jonathan,

“and the sheep and the oxen on the morrow;”

some distinguish them thus, the flock for the duty of the passover, the herd for the peace offerings, so Aben Ezra; or as Jarchi interprets it, the flock of the lambs and kids, and the herd for the Chagigah or festival; in the Talmud ^{f172}; the flock, this is the passover; the herd, this is the Chagigah, so Abendana: there was a Chagigah of the fourteenth day, which was brought with the lamb and eaten first, when the company was too large for the lamb, that their might eat with satiety ^{f173}; but this was not reckoned obligatory upon them ^{f174}, but they were bound to bring their Chagigah on the fifteenth day:

in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there; that is, at Jerusalem, as the event has shown; hence we read of the parents of our Lord going up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover, (~~2~~Luke 2:41).

Ver. 3. *Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it,* etc.] With the passover, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it; that is, with the passover lamb, nor indeed with any of the passover, or peace offerings, as follows; (see ~~12~~Exodus 12:8)

seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread therewith; with the passover; this plainly shows, that by the passover in the preceding verse is not meant strictly the passover lamb, for that was eaten at once on the night of the fourteenth of the month, and not seven days running, and therefore must be put for the whole solemnity of the feast, and all the sacrifices of it, both the lamb of the fourteenth, and the Chagigah of the fifteenth, and every of the peace offerings of the rest of the days were to be eaten with unleavened bread:

[even] the bread of affliction; so called either from the nature of its being heavy and lumpish, not grateful to the taste nor easy of digestion, and was mortifying and afflicting to be obliged to eat of it seven days together; or rather from the use of it, which was, as Jarchi observes, to bring to remembrance the affliction they were afflicted with in Egypt:

for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste; and had not time to leaven their dough; so that at first they were obliged through necessity to eat unleavened bread, and afterwards by the command of God in remembrance of it; (see ^{<0123>}Exodus 12:33,34,39),

that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life; how it was with them then, how they were hurried out with their unleavened dough; and that this might be imprinted on their minds, the master of the family used ^{f175}, at the time of the passover, to break a cake of unleavened bread, and say, this is the bread of affliction, etc. or bread of poverty; as it is the way of poor men to have broken bread, so here is broken bread.

Ver. 4. *And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days*, etc.] For before the passover they were to search diligently every room in the house, and every hole and crevice, that none might remain any where; (see ^{<0125>}Exodus 12:15,19 13:7),

neither shall there be anything of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning; which may be understood both of the flesh of the passover lamb, as Aben Ezra, according to (^{<0120>}Exodus 12:10) and of the flesh of flocks and herds, or of the Chagigah; according to Jarchi this Scripture speaks of the Chagigah of the fourteenth, which was not to remain on the first day of the feast (the fifteenth) until the morning of the second day (the sixteenth).

Ver. 5. *Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates,* etc.] Or cities, as the Targum of Jonathan, so called because they usually had gates to them, in which public affairs were transacted; but in none of these, only in the city of Jerusalem, the place the Lord chose, might they kill the passover and eat it, and other passover offerings:

which the Lord thy God giveth thee; in the land of Canaan, and which land was given them of God.

Ver. 6. *But at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in,* etc.] To place the ark and the mercy seat with the cherubim over them, where he caused his Shechinah, or divine Majesty, to dwell; and this was at Jerusalem, where the temple was built by Solomon:

there thou shalt sacrifice the passover; kill and eat the paschal lamb:

at even, at the going down of the sun; between the two evenings it was killed, before the sun was set, and afterwards at night it was eaten; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“and at evening, at the setting of the sun, ye shall eat it until the middle of the night:”

at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt; or as the same Targum,

“the time of the beginning of your redemption out of Egypt;”

which was when Pharaoh rose at midnight, and gave them leave to go; from thence their redemption commenced, though they did not actually set out until the morning.

Ver. 7. *And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose,* etc.] The word for “roast” signifies to “boil”, and is justly so used, and so Onkelos here renders it, and the Septuagint version both roast and boil; but it is certain that the passover lamb was not to be boiled, it is expressly forbidden, (^{<12128>}Exodus 12:8,9) wherefore some think the Chagigah is here meant, and the other offerings that were offered at this feast; and so in the times of Josiah they roasted the passover with fire, according to the ordinance of God; but the other holy offerings sod or boiled they in pots, cauldrons and pans, and divided them speedily among the people, (^{<4513>}2 Chronicles 35:13), but the passover lamb seems plainly to be meant here by the connection of this verse with the preceding verses;

wherefore Jarchi observes, that this is to be understood of roasting with fire, though expressed by this word:

and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents; not in the morning of the fifteenth, after the passover had been killed and eaten on the fourteenth, but in the morning, after the feast of unleavened bread, which lasted seven days, was over; though some think that they might if they would depart home after the passover had been observed, and were not obliged to stay and keep the feast of unleavened bread at Jerusalem, but march to their own cities; and so Aben Ezra observes, that some say a man may go on a feast day to his house and country, but, says he, we do not agree to it; and it appears from the observation of other feasts, which lasted as long as these, that the people did not depart to their tents till the whole was over; (see ^{<1086>}1 Kings 8:66 ^{<4470>}2 Chronicles 7:10) and with this agrees the Targum of Jonathan,

“and thou shall turn in the morning of the going out of the feast, and go to thy cities.”

Jarchi indeed interprets it afterwards of the second day.

Ver. 8. *Six days shalt thou eat unleavened bread*, etc.] In other places it is ordered to be eaten seven days, (^{<2215>}Exodus 12:15,19 13:6,7) and here it is not said six only; it was to be eaten on the seventh as on the other, though that is here distinguished from the six, because of special and peculiar service assigned to it, but not because of an exemption from eating unleavened bread on it. The Jews seem to understand this of different corn of which the bread was made, and not of different sort of bread; the Targum of Jonathan is, on the first day ye shall offer the sheaf (the firstfruits of the barley harvest), and on the six days which remain ye shall begin to eat the unleavened bread of the new fruits, and so Jarchi:

and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord thy God; a holy convocation, devoted to religious exercises, and the people were restrained, according to the sense of the word, from all servile work, as follows:

thou shalt do no work therein; that is, the business of their callings, their trades and manufactories; they were obliged to abstain from all kind of work excepting what was necessary for the dressing of food, and in this it differed from a sabbath; (see ^{<2216>}Exodus 12:16 ^{<2218>}Leviticus 23:8).

Ver. 9. *Seven weeks then shalt thou number unto thee*, etc.] And then another feast was to take place, called from hence the feast of weeks, and sometimes Pentecost, from its being the fiftieth day:

begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn; for the sheaf of the wave offering, as the first fruits of barley harvest, which was done on the morrow after the sabbath in the passover week, and from thence seven weeks or fifty days were reckoned, and the fiftieth day was the feast here ordered to be kept; so the Targum of Jonathan,

“after the reaping of the sheaf ye shall begin to number seven weeks;”

(see ^{<R2315>}Leviticus 23:15).

Ver. 10. *And thou shall keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God*, etc.] The feast of Pentecost, at which time the Spirit was poured down upon the apostles, (^{<R317>}Acts 2:1)

with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand; there were two wave loaves which were ordered to be brought and seven lambs, one young bullock and two rams for a burnt offering, together with the meat and drink offerings belonging thereunto, and a kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs for a peace offering, (^{<R317>}Leviticus 23:17-19), and besides all this, there was to be a voluntary contribution brought in their hands; for this was one of those feasts at which all the males were to appear before the Lord, and none of them empty:

which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God,

according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee; no certain rate was fixed, it was to be a free gift, and in proportion to a man's abilities, or what the Lord had blessed him with.

Ver. 11. *And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God*, etc.] Make a liberal feast, and keep it cheerfully, in the presence of God, in the place where he resides, thankfully acknowledging all his mercies and favours:

thou, and thy son, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates; that dwelt in the same city, who were all to come with him to Jerusalem at this feast, and to partake of it with him:

and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there; who should be at Jerusalem at this time.

Ver. 12. *And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt,* etc.] And now delivered from that bondage; the consideration of which should make them liberal in their freewill offering, and generous in the feast they provided, and compassionate to the stranger, widow, and fatherless:

and thou shalt observe and do these statutes; concerning the passover, the feast of unleavened bread, and of Pentecost, and the peace offerings and the freewill offerings belonging to them: and nothing could more strongly oblige them to observe them than their redemption from their bondage in Egypt; as nothing more engages to the performance of good works than the consideration of our spiritual and eternal redemption by Christ, (~~4169~~1 Corinthians 6:19,20 ~~4014~~Titus 1:14 ~~4017~~1 Peter 1:17-19).

Ver. 13. *Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days,* etc.] Which began on the fifteenth day of Tisri, or September; (see ~~4234~~Leviticus 23:34), etc.

after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine; and therefore sometimes called the feast of ingathering, (~~4236~~Exodus 23:16), barley harvest began at the passover, and wheat harvest at Pentecost; and before the feast of tabernacles began, the vintage and the gathering of the olives were over, as well as all other summer fruits were got in.

Ver. 14. *And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast,* etc.] At this feast of tabernacles and ingathering of the fruits of the earth, in token of gratitude and thankfulness for the goodness of God bestowed on them; the Targum of Jonathan adds, with the flute and the pipe, making use of instrumental music to increase the joy on this occasion:

thou and thy son, etc. (See Gill on "~~4641~~Deuteronomy 16:11")

Ver. 15. *Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God,* etc.] The feast of tabernacles still spoken of:

in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: the city of Jerusalem:

because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy increase, and in all the works of thine hands; both in the increase of their fields, vineyards, and oliveyards, and also in their several handicraft trades and occupations they

were employed in; so Aben Ezra interprets all the works of their hands of merchandise and manufactories:

therefore thou shalt surely rejoice; extremely, heartily, and sincerely, and not fail to express joy on this occasion, and manifest it by a generous freewill offering to the Lord, and a bountiful entertainment for himself, his family, friends, and others.

Ver. 16. *Three times a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God*, etc.] This has been observed before, (^{<0237>}Exodus 23:17 34:23), and is repeated here for the sake of mentioning the place where they were to appear, which before now was not observed, and indeed it is chiefly for that the other festivals are here recited:

in the place which he shall choose; which though not expressed is now easily understood; and the three times at which they were to appear there were, in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; or passover, Pentecost, and tabernacles; and of numbers of people going up from the country to each of these feasts, we have instances in the New Testament; to the passover, (^{<0100>}Luke 2:42,44 ^{<0115>}John 11:55), to Pentecost, (^{<0116>}Acts 2:5-11), to tabernacles, (^{<0100>}John 7:2,10),

and they shall not appear before the Lord empty; Aben Ezra observes, the meaning is, not empty of the tribute of the freewill offering of their hand, and which Jarchi more fully explains of the burnt offerings of appearance, and of the peace offerings of the Chagigah, or money answerable to them; which, according to the Misnah ^{f176} was a meah of silver for a burnt offering, and two pieces of silver for the Chagigah, which weighed thirty two barley corns ^{f177}

Ver. 17. *Every man shall give as he is able*, etc.] The quantity to be given is not fixed in the law, but the wise men appointed it, as observed on (^{<0106>}Deuteronomy 16:16) but it is left by the Lord to the generosity of the people, only giving this general rule, that they should do according to their ability, and as the Lord had prospered them; (see ^{<0100>}1 Corinthians 16:2) so Jarchi,

“every man that hath many eatables and much goods shall bring many burnt offerings and many peace offerings.”

Ver. 18. *Judges and officers shall thou make thee*, etc.] Judges were fixed in the sanhedrim, or court of judicature, and those that have lawsuits come before them; officers are masters of the staff and whip, and they stand before the judges, and go into markets, streets, and shops, to order the weights and measures, and to smite all that do wrong; and all they do is by order of the judges; so Maimonides ^{f178}: the qualifications of judges to be chosen and constituted by the people are thus described by him. In the sanhedrim, greater or lesser, they place only men wise and understanding, expert in the wisdom of the law, and masters of great knowledge, and that know some of the other sciences, as medicine, arithmetic, astronomy, and astrology, the ways of soothsayers, diviners, and wizards, and the vanities of idolatry, that they may know how to judge them; and they set in the sanhedrim only priests, Levites, and Israelites, who are genealogized; nor do they set an old man there, nor an eunuch, nor a king, but an high priest, if he is qualified with wisdom; and they must be free from blemishes, and of a good stature and appearance, and understand many languages, and not hear by an interpreter; and though all this was not precisely required of the sanhedrim of three judges, yet these same things ought to be in everyone of them, wisdom, and meekness, and fear, and hatred of money, and love of truth, and love of men, and to be of a good report ^{f179} and these were to be placed in

all thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes; that is, in every city, as Onkelos, and so Jarchi; and usually the courts of judicature were held in the gates of cities, and it was only in the land of Israel, not without it, that they were obliged to set up courts of judicature, as Maimonides ^{f180} observes; who also asks, how many courts were fixed in Israel, and what the number they consisted of? to which he answers, they fixed at first the great court in the sanctuary, and it was called the great sanhedrim, and its number were seventy one; and again, they set up two courts of twenty three, one at the door of the court, and the other at the door of the mountain of the house (and so in the Misnah) ^{f181}; and they set up in every city in Israel, in which were one hundred and twenty (men or families) or more, a lesser sanhedrim, which sat in the gate, and their number were twenty three judges; in a city in which there were not one hundred and twenty, they placed three judges, for there is no court less than three ^{f182}:

and they shall judge the people with just judgment; give a right and just sentence in all cases that come before them, according to the laws of God, and the rules of justice and equity.

Ver. 19. *Thou shalt not wrest judgment*, etc.] Or pervert it, pass a wrong sentence, or act contrary to justice; this is said to the judges as a direction to them, and so what follows:

thou shalt not respect persons; so as to give the cause on account of outward circumstances and relations; as in favour of a rich man against a poor man merely for that reason, or of a near relation or intimate friend and acquaintance against a stranger, but justice should be administered without favour or affection to any; as Jarchi puts it, he was to make no difference in his address and behaviour to contending parties before him; he was not to be tender and soft to one and hard to the other, or let one stand and another sit:

neither take a gift: as a bribe to give the cause wrong: at Thebes, in Egypt, as Diodorus Siculus^{f183} relates, in a court on a wall, were images of judges to the number of thirty; in the midst of them was the chief judge; having Truth hanging down from his neck (which seems to be in imitation of the Urim of the high priest of the Jews), his eyes shut, and many books by him; by which image was shown, that judges should receive nothing, and that the chief judge should look to truth only:

for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous; (see ^{<0238>}Exodus 23:8) the Jews have a saying, that a judge that takes a bribe, and perverts judgment, does not die of old age, or till his eyes become dim^{f184}.

Ver. 20. *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow*, etc.] Or “justice”, “justice”^{f185}, strict justice, and nothing else:

that thou mayest live and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee; that is, continue in the possession of it.

Ver. 21. *Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees*, etc.] Of any sort of trees, as oaks or any other; not but that it was lawful to plant trees and groves of them, but not for a religious or idolatrous use: particularly

near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee; as the Heathens did near their altars, lest it should be thought to be done for a like

superstitious and idolatrous use; which evil the Jews sometimes fell into in the times of wicked reigns, and which their good and pious kings removed and destroyed; (see ^{<1284>}2 Kings 18:4 21:3 23:4,7,14,15) and Hecataeus ^{f186}, an Heathen historian, relates of the city of Jerusalem, that there were there no image, nor plantation, nor grove, nor any such thing.

Ver. 22. *Neither shalt thou set up any image*, etc.] Graven or molten, of man, beast, fish, or fowl; the word signifies a “statue or pillar”, ^{f187} which was set up for idolatry; for, as Aben Ezra observes, what was not set up for idolatry was not forbidden, as when erected in memory of any action or remarkable event; (see ^{<1620>}Joshua 22:10), etc.

which the Lord thy God hateth; as he does every species, of idolatry, or that has any tendency to it; it being so opposite to his being, perfections, and glory; and therefore nothing should be done like it, because it is so hateful to him.